

Report for the Ministry of Social Development

**Motivational Interviewing within Work and Income: Interim Report
– Analysis of Group Data from the Lower South Island**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Objectives

Motivational Interviewing is an evidenced-based collaborative, person-centred approach for building and strengthening motivation for change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Fundamental to MI is a way of being or spirit, which is a partnership way of working, which shows respect for the client. This creates a safe space where clients feel heard and understood (Westra & Aviram, 2013). Motivational Interviewing was initially developed in the addictions domain, and its application has rapidly expanded to encompass other health and mental health domains (e.g. Arkowitz et al., 2015), and behaviour change more generally (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

Motivational Interviewing is likely to be a useful skill for Work and Income staff given that motivation and ambivalence can be important factors in return to work, especially for those with a health condition or disability (Hampson et al., 2015; Larson, 2008; Manthey et al., 2011). There has been some research in this area, however, there are some gaps in knowledge and also some limitations with this past research that need to be addressed. For example, none of these studies provide data on the fidelity of the MI provided. When practicing MI, it is crucial to know whether clients are getting an acceptable level of MI as this helps to draw accurate conclusions regarding the effectiveness of it. Further, there needs to be confidence that what is provided is actually MI. Additionally MI-inconsistent behaviour on behalf of the practitioner has been shown to reduce outcome effectiveness (Apodaca & Longabaugh, 2009) emphasising the importance of fidelity to MI.

The current study involved training Work and Income Case managers and Work Brokers in MI which they then utilised in work-focussed conversations with work-ready clients. It was hypothesised that Work and Income staff when provided with training in MI

would increase their MI consistent behaviours within their conversations with work-ready clients. Further, the increase in MI skills would lead to improved client experience, and would result in increased change talk spoken by clients during these conversations.

The study comprised three phases: baseline (pre-MI training); a training phase, and intervention (MI). Sessions were audio-recorded, when clients agreed to this, during all three phases. The study was conducted in Lower South Island (staff n=5), Christchurch (staff n=5), and Nelson region (staff n=8). Due to external factors (Mosque Shootings and Covid-19) Christchurch and Nelson offices only completed baseline.

The lower South Island staff received the MI training and had started the intervention when the study was put on hold due to Covid-19 in March 2020. The MI training was provided in three 5 hours workshops and took place fortnightly. The training was facilitated by an Associate Professor Eileen Britt, who is an experienced MI trainer and a member of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers. After the workshop-based training, all participating staff received ongoing individual feedback and coaching, and attended group coaching every two weeks for two hours to develop their skills to at least a beginning proficiency level. This interim report provides an analysis of the group data relating to the staff skills and the client experience and client change talk (a marker of motivation for change).

Main Findings

The outcomes of interest in the current report were: staff skills measured by Motivational Interviewing Treatment Integrity (MITI 4.2.1) scale (Moyers et al., 2014); the client experience of their conversations with the Case Managers and Work Brokers, measured by Client Evaluation of MI (CEMI) questionnaire (Madson et al., 2013), and client change talk measured by the Client Language Easy Rating (CLEAR) system (Glynn & Moyers, 2012).

The results showed that after training staff engaged with their clients in a way that was consistent with MI, which was likely to promote a stronger working alliance with the clients and increased motivation for change. This was statistically different from baseline/pre-training during which no staff met the threshold for proficiency in MI. Staff conversations during this time mostly involved staff assuming an expert role, with little partnership or collaboration with the client, giving little attention to, or made sporadic efforts to explore the client's perspective, and mostly involved asking a lot of questions with some persuading and confrontation of clients.

There were no discernible differences between pre-training to post-workshop training in the clients' experience of their conversations. This was mostly because many participants' ratings at baseline were already close to the maximum scores, so there was a strong ceiling effect suggesting a positive working relationship between clients and staff member which continued after MI training.

However, there was a statistically significant increase of change talk from baseline to post-MI-training. This suggests that the increase in MI skills of the staff resulted in increased client change talk within sessions.

Recommendations

In summary, the current study highlights the potential for MI training of Work and Income staff to improve their relational and technical skills. Improved relational skills will improve the working alliance between Work and Income staff, with clients experiencing these conversations as empathic and empowering. Further, increased technical skills of staff means that staff are able to build and strengthen clients' motivation for change. Given the wealth of literature linking working alliance and increased change talk to treatment outcome/behaviour change, further training of Work and Income staff is recommended.

With regards to staff training, previous research and the results of the current study show that it is possible to learn the basic (micro-counselling) skills and spirit of MI after attending workshop-based training similar to what provided in the current study. As a result of workshop-based training staff are able to work in a way that is more partnership-based and empowering, and to increase their empathic listening skills. However, research shows that mastering deeper level of reflections, evoking and strengthening change talk, while softening sustain talk requires training and ongoing practice, feedback and coaching (de Roten et al., 2013). Without more comprehensive training (as provided in the current study) Work and Income staff may not be able to achieve proficiency, especially in the technical aspects (focus on change talk), of MI. Given the intensity of the training required to achieve this level of skill, different levels of training could be offered to different groups of staff within Work and Income. Training that focused on the spirit of MI and empathic listening skills may be of benefit to most Work and Income staff. For staff whose role is to work with work-ready clients with a view to assisting them into training and/or employment, then more comprehensive MI training would be of benefit so that they can also develop the technical skills of MI to build and strengthen clients' motivation for change.

Introduction

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is an evidenced-based collaborative, person-centred approach for building motivation for change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013) and can be a means of building an individual's motivation and confidence for behaviour change. Motivational Interviewing was initially developed as an approach to help people with alcohol abuse and dependence (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Its application has broadened beyond the field of addiction to a range of different behaviours, including health behaviour change (Lundahl et al., 2013), and intervention engagement (Carroll et al., 2001; Dean et al., 2016; Lundahl et al., 2010; Medley & Powell, 2010; Seal et al., 2012; Strong et al., 2012; Venner & Verney, 2015). Additionally, research indicates that MI has a more significant effect on ethnic-cultural groups who have experienced marginalisation and societal pressure (Lundahl et al., 2010). In addition, MI appears to be a good fit with ways of interacting and working with Maori (Britt et al., 2014).

Motivational Interviewing is also likely to be a useful skill for Work and Income staff given that motivation and ambivalence are important factors in willingness to engage in training or return to work (Britt et al., 2018), and even more so for those with a health condition or disability (Britt et al., 2018; Hampson et al., 2015). Motivational Interviewing has been recommended as a means of increasing employment rates for individuals receiving employment support (Larson, 2008; Muscat, 2005; Wagner & McMahon, 2004), vocational rehabilitation (Fraser et al., 2004; Lloyd et al., 2008; Manthey et al., 2011; Manthey, 2009; Page & Tchernitskaia, 2014; Wagner & McMahon, 2004) and career counselling (Brooks, 2005; Stoltz & Young, 2013). Research also suggests that re-engaging in work, as soon as it is safe and healthy to do so, can play an important role in an individual's recovery process as well as prevent broader social and economic cost of time off work (Black, 2008).

Motivational Interviewing can be learnt without any prior training or professional background (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). One of the most important findings on MI training

suggests that self-directed learning through reading books and self-reflection is not an effective strategy for learning MI (Smith et al., 2017). MI training is often provided in workshops lasting between 1-3 days (Bennett et al., 2007; Schumacher et al., 2014) and it requires ongoing coaching and feedback (Miller et al., 2004).

There are two aspects to learning MI – the relational component and the technical component. The relational component relates to the practitioner developing a relationship based on engagement and empathy with clients which is referred to as the ‘Spirit’ of MI (Miller & Rollnick, 2012). This involves the practitioner behaving in ways that fosters partnership with the client, honours the client’s knowledge and experience; conveys acceptance of the client’s worth and autonomy, and shows compassion for the client; and has the belief that the potential for change already lies within the client. The technical component of MI involves the practitioner learning skills to cultivate change talk (talk a client makes about making change e.g., seeking training and/or employment) and softening sustain talk (talk a client makes about not changing). Thus, in practicing MI, practitioners need to demonstrate both relational and technical component. While learning the relational component of MI, often involves building on skills that practitioners may already have, learning the technical component of MI can often be more challenging (Forsberg et al., 2010).

The MI Spirit (e.g., empathy, collaboration) of MI has been found to predict greater working alliance (Boardman et al., 2006). Research has also shown practitioners behaving consistent with the spirit of MI can be sufficient to facilitate change (Apodaca & Longabaugh, 2009). Additionally, MI-inconsistent behaviour on behalf of the practitioner has been shown to reduce outcome effectiveness (Apodaca & Longabaugh, 2009). Further, change talk is a marker of motivation for change (Amrhein, 2004), and the more frequent and stronger the change talk a client expresses within session (and the less and softer the sustain talk), the more

likely it is that they will change their behaviour (Apodaca & Longabaugh, 2009; Copeland et al., 2015; Miller & Rose, 2009; Morgenstern et al., 2012; Moyers et al., 2009).

Therefore, MI is not a simple counselling approach to master (Miller & Rollnick, 2009). Forsberg et al. (2008) suggest that the complexity of developing sufficient competence in conducting MI is an important barrier to transferring the training into practice. Walters et al. (2005) have shown that MI competence tends to decay quickly unless there is some systematic post-training support, supervision or training. Eroding MI skills post-workshop suggests that ongoing post-workshop supervision and coaching are needed to maintain proficiency, especially for newly trained practitioners.

It is also important that fidelity of MI is measured to draw conclusions regarding the effectiveness of MI, as there needs to be some confidence that what was provided was actually MI. However, none of the previous research on MI within an employment context provide data on the fidelity of the MI provided. Additionally, among the previous research on MI in the area of employment, only one study (Britt et al., 2018) provided MI training and ongoing coaching and coding consistent with the mentioned recommendations.

Further, recent research of the Work and Income environment from the client perspective has identified that there is considerable emotional complexity within this environment with strong feelings being provoked (Gray, 2017). The Work and Income environment was described as hostile and unwelcoming, with the potential for significant distress to be caused by the way some WINZ staff treat their clients (Gray, 2017). As mentioned earlier, at the heart of MI are core values of partnership, acceptance, compassion, and the belief that the potential for change lies within the individual (client), and empathic listening is a core skill of MI (i.e., the relational component of MI). This relational component of MI is likely to facilitate more positive relationships between Work and Income staff and clients.

Given the above, the current research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of MI within the Work and Income context, using a multilevel mixed method including a pre-and post-test design. The research will add to the emerging body of knowledge in the area of MI and return to work/employment, and is the first study of its kind in New Zealand. The current interim report is of group analysis of preliminary data (pre-training, training, and post-MI training up to when the study was put on-hold in March 2020 due to Covid-19) from the Lower South Island.

Hypotheses

It was hypothesised that Work and Income staff when provided with training in MI would increase their MI consistent behaviours within conversations with work-ready clients. Further, the increase in MI skills would lead to improved client experience. Moreover, this will result in increased change talk spoken by clients during the MI consistent conversations.

Method

Procedure

Following ethical approval with the Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, and Ministry of Social Development approval, the researchers met with the service managers, case managers and work brokers at Work and Income offices in Christchurch, Nelson and Dunedin. At these meetings, the general purpose and process of the study was explained. Staff who were interested in participating in the study signed the consent form and sent it to the researchers. A total of 18 staff consented to participate in the study. This comprised five staff from the Lower South Island (Timaru, Dunedin and Invercargill), five from Christchurch, and eight staff from the Nelson region (Nelson and Richmond).

The study compromised three phases: baseline (pre-MI training); a training phase, and intervention. Due to external factors (Mosque Shootings and Covid-19) Christchurch and Nelson offices only completed baseline. The lower South Island staff started the intervention up until it was put on hold in March 2020 due to Covid-19.

Baseline (Pre-Training)

For the purpose of baseline stage, work-ready clients of each participating staff member were asked if they are willing to participate as a control group (n=54) in the study. These sessions were audio-recorded. In addition, the clients were asked to complete the Participant Questionnaire before and after their session. It was the post-session questionnaire which included the CEMI. The baseline stage consisted of 54 client participants seen between March 2019 and Feb 2020, of these 19 clients were from the lower South Island, the focus of this interim report.

Training

Case managers in the Lower South Island received three 5-hour MI training sessions held fortnightly. The training was facilitated by an Associate Professor Eileen Britt, who is an experienced MI trainer and a member of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers, an international collective of MI trainers which promotes excellence in MI training, research, implementation and practice. The aim of the workshop training was for participants to learn the basic style of MI and how to continue learning it in practice. The workshop included introducing staff to the spirit of MI; the righting reflex (the compassionate tendency for people in helping roles to want to put things right and focus on solutions rather than first building motivation for change); the four processes of MI; core skills; and how to evoke and respond to change talk. The workshops comprised video-recorded demonstrations, didactic teaching,

modelling, and practice exercises with feedback. Multiple opportunities were provided throughout the workshop for participants to practice and receive feedback on MI skills.

After the workshop training, staff continued practicing their MI skills and recorded their conversation with work-focused clients. All of these sessions were audio-recorded and coded using MITI 4.2.1 (Moyers et al., 2014), and staff were provided with individual feedback to further develop their MI skills.

Additionally, group coaching sessions were held every two weeks. During each of these coaching sessions, a 10 min selection from two of these audio recordings were reviewed by the trainers and the case managers received feedback from the other staff and the trainer using a structured format. Except in two cases, all six coaching sessions were provided by the same trainer. The other two sessions were provided by the third researcher who is also a member of MINT. Coaching sessions began about 2 weeks after the completion of training and continued biweekly. This was known as the training phase. A total of six coaching sessions were provided during the training phase and two coaching sessions were held when staff had started recruitment for the intervention phase of the study.

Intervention

Staff began recruiting work-focused clients as participants for the intervention phase after 16 weeks of individual feedback and coaching. All sessions were audio-recorded and coded during the intervention phase, and feedback and coaching continued to be provided.

The MI intervention was planned to comprise up to four 20-40 minute individual MI conversations with each client, once every two weeks for eight weeks. The proposal to hold four sessions was based on the results of Britt et al. (2018) which found that majority of participants showed increased motivation for employment within four sessions and research that shows, while one MI session can be more effective, more than one session tends to have

greater effects (Lundahl et al., 2010). However, the research was put on hold due to Covid-19 with only the first session having been held with all intervention clients. A total of eight clients had been recruited at this point by four of the staff.

Measures

All sessions (baseline, training and intervention) were coded using MITI 4.2.1 scale as a measure of each individual staff members' skills in MI, and the Client Language Easy Rating (CLEAR) system (Glynn & Moyers, 2012) to evaluate the occurrence of change within sessions. Coding the MITI 4.2.1 involves global ratings of the technical component (cultivating change talk and softening sustain talk), and the relational component (partnership and empathy) of MI. Cultivating change talk measures the client's own language in favour of change and confidence for making that change. Softening sustain talk measures avoidance of focusing on the reasons against changing or on maintaining the status quo. Partnership conveys that expertise and wisdom about change resides mostly within the client. Empathy involves the practitioner conveying an understanding or making an effort in grasping the client's perspective and experience. The MITI 4.2.1 also includes behaviour counts of giving information, questions, simple reflections, complex reflections, affirmations, seeking collaboration, and emphasising autonomy (MI-consistent behaviours), and confront, persuade, and persuade with permission (MI-inconsistent behaviours). Each global scale is measured on a 5-point Likert scale, while behaviour counts are tallied for each occurrence of MI specified behaviours and summary scores are generated. The MITI 4.2.1 proposes two levels of competence in MI - "fair" and "good" (Moyers et al., 2005). The inter-rater reliability for all items in the MITI is in the good to excellent range (0.65 to 0.98) (Moyers et al., 2016). Also, summary scores from the MITI have correlated with client outcomes in the expected direction (McCambridge et al., 2011; Moyers et al., 2016; Woodin et al., 2012).

The purpose of the CLEAR is to classify and quantify client language that is either change talk (CT) or counter-change talk (CCT), otherwise known as sustain talk. As such, the CLEAR focuses upon the type of in-session client language (change talk) that is positively correlated with future change. It is calculated as change talk frequency over the sum of change talk frequency plus counter-change talk frequency ($\% CT = CT / [CT + CCT]$).

Additionally, clients who agreed to participate in the baseline and intervention phases of the study were asked to complete a Participant Questionnaire which included the Client Evaluation of MI – CEMI (Madson et al., 2013) after each session (baseline and MI). The CEMI is a 12 item measure for assessing client perceptions of practitioner's use of MI. Participants use a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all to 4 = a great deal) to rate the degree to which the MI practitioner demonstrated each of 12 behaviours during their most recent session. It has two subscales consistent with the relational and technical components of MI (Madson et al., 2013). The seven item technical factor includes items that assess the practitioner's behaviours consistent with discussing behaviour change consistent with a MI approach. The four item relationship factor comprises items that assess practitioner relationship behaviours.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics; statistical tests of difference for group/pooled data; and effect sizes. Data from the training and intervention phases were combined to form two groups from the Lower South Island which could be compared. These were baseline (pre-MI training) and post-MI training (data from the training and intervention phases combined).

Descriptive statistics, statistical tests of difference for group/pooled data, and effect sizes were used to evaluate: the effects of the MI training on the practice of staff from the

Lower South Island; if the staff conversations with clients at the other locations (Christchurch and Nelson) were similar to the pre-training practice of the staff from the Lower South Island; and the client within session language (change talk) pre- and post-MI training. As there were only eight clients recruited into the intervention phase before the study was put on-hold from which the client experience (CEMI) of the MI conversations was collected, only descriptive statistics were calculated for comparison of the clients' experience of MI between pre- and post-MI training.

Results

Staff behaviour

Baseline

Pre-training (T1) none of the staff from the Lower South Island's conversations (n=19) met criteria for MI proficiency (Table 1 and Table 2). The baseline conversations typically involved staff asking a lot questions, with few reflections (R:Q = 0:0.14). Further, any reflections that were used tended to be simple reflections (repeating back what the client is the same of different words), with few complex reflections (%CR = 6.99) which convey a deeper understanding of what the client has said. These sessions also included both MI-inconsistent behaviours (persuading and confronting) and MI-consistent behaviours (affirmations, seeking collaboration, and emphasising autonomy), with MI-consistent behaviours ($\bar{x} = 5.94$) occurring more frequently than MI-inconsistent behaviours ($\bar{x} = 3.31$). Additionally, there was little attention in these sessions to the technical aspects of MI ($\bar{x} = 1$) of increasing change talk and softening sustain talk, and the relational scores were also low ($\bar{x} = 1.71$). The low relational scores, suggest that staff were typically taking an expert role, with little partnership or collaboration with the client, and gave little attention to, or made sporadic efforts to explore, the client's perspective.

Table 1*MITI 4.2.1 Results for Global Scores and Behaviour Counts*

Global Score and Behaviour counts (n =19)	Mean		Standard Deviation		% Does Not Meet Threshold		% Fair Level of Proficiency		Good Level of Proficiency		P-Value/Effect size
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	
Relational Skills	1.71	3.84	0.5	0.85	100	26.1	0	4.3	0	69.6	0.000*/3.08
Technical Skills	1	3.26	0	0.56	100	13	0	60.9	0	26.1	0.000*/5.78
R:Q	0.14	1.16	0.11	0.83	100	47.8	0	26.1	0	26.1	0.000*/1.75
CR%	6.99	65.61	13.9	22.16	100	13	0	8.7	0	78.3	0.000*/3.17

Table 2*MITI 4.2.1 Results for MI Consistent and Non-Consistent Behaviours*

Case Managers' skills (n = 19)	Mean		Standard Deviation		P-Value/Effect size
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	
MI Consistent Behaviour	5.94	8.86	3.74	5.86	0.058*/0.59
MI Non-Consistent Behaviour	3.31	0.30	3.59	0.70	0.002*/1.16

A one way ANOVA and post hoc Tukey test was applied to compare the staff baseline skills between Christchurch, Nelson, and Lower South. The results show that there was no statistically significant differences between staff, suggesting that staff across all three offices behaved in a similar way with their clients, and that this was not consistent with MI-practice. Partnership and empathy were low, as was attention to change talk. Additionally, staff in their conversations primarily used questions (and few reflections), and used more MI consistent behaviours (affirmations, seeking collaboration, and emphasising autonomy) compared to MI-inconsistent behaviours (persuading and confronting).

However, there was a significantly difference between the technical score of the staff from the Christchurch and Nelson offices and staff from the Lower South. This difference was

due to little sustain talk occurring in some of the Nelson and Christchurch sessions. The MITI coding guidelines requires these to be coded higher for softening sustain talk, not because there was sustain talk and the staff managed it well, but rather simply because there was little sustain talk in the session. Moreover, it was observed that in these same sessions where there was little sustain talk, the staff showed little attention to the client change talk (received low scores on the cultivating change talk scale).

Post-MI Workshop Training

Post-MI workshop training (T2) the majority of the audios of the staff conversations (n=25) with work-ready clients from the Lower South Island reached criteria for either fair or good MI on the MITI. Specifically, 73.9% of audios met these criteria for the relational aspect ($\bar{x} = 3.84$), which suggests that staff were actively trying to understand the client's perspective and were fostering collaboration with the client. Additionally, 87% of the audios met criteria for the technical aspect of MI ($\bar{x} = 3.26$), which suggests that staff were attending to the client's language in favour of change (change talk) and showed instances of shifting away (softening) sustain talk. Further, 52.2% and 87% of audios also met MITI criteria for a fair or good level of proficiency in MI for the R:Q and %CR. After MI training, the staff were using more reflections and more complex reflections. Reflections occurred at least as frequently as questions (R:Q = 1.16:1.0) and 65.61% of the reflections were complex, conveying a deeper understanding of the client. Further, post-MI workshop training the staff engaged in more ($\bar{x} = 8.86$) MI-consistent behaviour (affirmations, seeking collaboration, and emphasising autonomy) and infrequently ($\bar{x} = 0.30$) engaged in MI-inconsistent behaviour (which was limited to persuading).

There was a statistically significant increase across all scores on the MITI from pre- to post-MI workshop training, with large effect sizes (Table 1 and Table 2). The statistical

difference was calculated using the Welch's F test (Welch, 1938) because the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not met. Since Welch test was used, the adjusted omega squared formula was applied to report the effect size (Welch, 1938). The Welch's test results for the global scores and behaviour counts are as below: relational aspect Welch's $F(1, 36.59) = 100.02, p < .000$; technical aspect Welch's $F(1, 22.08) = 370.48, p < .000$; ratio of reflections to questions Welch's $F(1, 23.03) = 33.46, p < .000$; %complex reflections Welch's $F(1, 37.54) = 109, p < .000$; MI-consistent behaviours Welch's $F(1, 37.83) = 3.82, p < .058$, and MI non-consistent behaviours Welch's $F(1, 19.14) = 12.95, p < .02$.

Client Experience

Twenty-seven clients completed the CEMI questionnaire, $n=19$ in baseline and $n=8$ in intervention ($n=8$). There was little differences between the CEMI total score as well as technical and relationship scores between baseline (T1) and intervention/post-MI training (T2) (Table 3). Many participants' ratings at baseline were already close to the maximum scores, so there was a strong ceiling effect. This suggests that participants at baseline experienced the relationship with the staff member they were working with positively and this was continued to be the case after MI training (during intervention). The only other pattern of note was that after MI training the standard deviations tended to be less, suggesting that there was less variation in the clients' experiences.

Table 3

CEMI Results

CEMI (n =27)	Total Score		Standard Deviation		Relationship Score		Standard Deviation		Technical Score		Standard Deviation	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
	47.26	46.25	8.41	7	15.7	17.25	4.91	3.73	27.47	24.62	7.36	6.25

Client Behaviour – Change Talk

The results of the CLEAR coding (Table 4) suggest that in their conversations with the staff, work-ready clients spoke more change talk (nearly twice as much) after the staff had attended the MI workshop training ($M = 79.84$, $SD = 24.53$) compared to baseline ($M = 46.70$, $SD = 35.74$). Once again the Levene's F test was significant showing that the homogeneity of variance assumption was not met, and so the Welch's F test was applied to test for statistical significance. This yielded a statistically significant difference between baseline and post-MI workshop training (Welch's $F(1, 30.28) = 12.03$, $p < .002$), with a large effect size.

Table 4

CLEAR Results

CT%	Pre-Training	Post-Training	P Value/Effect size
Mean	46.70	79.84	0.002*/1.08
St Deviation	35.74	24.53	

Conclusions

At baseline the conversations of Work and Income Case Managers and Work Brokers with work –ready clients were characterised by staff taking an expert role, asking a lot of questions, with little partnership or collaboration with the client, and paying little attention to, or making only sporadic efforts to explore, the client's perspective. The staff also engaged in persuasion and/or confronted the clients. Additionally, there was little attention to client change talk (client talk in favour of making a change e.g., seeking training and/or employment). Therefore, staff were behaving in a way that would be considered inconsistent with MI and in ways that are counterproductive to developing a strong working alliance (Boardman et al., 2006) and are unlikely to facilitate change (Apodaca & Longabaugh, 2009). This style of conversation also appears to be similar to the staff conversations with work-ready clients in the Christchurch and Nelson offices where baseline data was also collected. These findings may

provide some explanation as to why the Work and Income environment has been described in the past as hostile and unwelcoming (Gray, 2017).

In contrast, after training in MI, the staff conversations with work-ready clients were consistent with MI. Specifically, the staff demonstrated increased empathy and partnership with their clients, and attended to the client's language in favour of change (change talk) and showed instances of shifting away (softening) sustain talk (client talk about not changing). They also engaged in reflective listening, using reflections at least as much as questions; used more complex reflections than simple, which demonstrated a deeper understanding of the client; and more often engaged in behaviours (affirmations, seeking collaboration, and emphasising autonomy) likely to facilitate a more positive relationship with the client. This is an important change as this style of conversation has been found to be likely to promote a stronger working alliance with the clients and to facilitate change (Miller and Rollnick 2012).

In addition to the changes in the conversational behaviour of the staff, there were also changes in the client behaviour when the staff engaged in MI-consistent conversations with them. Specifically, there was an increase in change talk (talk in support of change) spoken by clients from baseline to post-MI workshop training. The link between MI skilfulness and change talk is well supported by research (e.g. Gaume et al., 2010), as is the link between change talk and client change (Amrhein et al., 2003; Apodaca & Longabaugh, 2009; Copeland et al., 2015; Karver et al., 2006; Morgenstern et al., 2012; Moyers et al., 2009; Shirk & Karver, 2003). The process of MI involves the practitioner guiding the conversation to encourage the client to speak change talk and to elaborate further on their change talk. This strengthens change talk and increases motivation by allowing the client to engage more fully with their own incentives for change (Westra & Aviram, 2013), which in turn increases the likelihood of actual behaviour change (Miller & Rollnick, 2012; Miller & Rose, 2009).

In the current study, outcome data as to whether the work-ready clients in the current study engaged in training or employment is not available. However, after training in MI the Work and Income Case Managers and Work Brokers were engaging in conversations with these clients that were likely to facilitate increased client motivation to engage in training or employment. Further, the clients behaved in these conversations a way (increased change talk) that also suggested that their motivation to seek training and/or employment had increased. Therefore, wider training in MI for Work and Income staff may be of benefit. This is likely to promote positive staff-client relationships, and lead to increased client motivation to engage in behaviour change.

There are two aspects to training MI – the relational component and the technical component (Miller & Rose, 2009). The relational component (also referred to as the spirit of MI) involves using empathic listening, and fostering a partnership with, and empowering, the client. The technical component of MI involves learning to cultivate change talk and softening sustain talk (talk a client makes about not changing). While learning the relational component of MI often involves building on skills that practitioners may already have, learning the technical component of MI can often be more challenging (Forsberg et al., 2010) and requires individual feedback and coaching (Miller & Rollnick, 2012). For this reason, it may be cost-effective for Work and Income to consider training the relational aspects of MI more widely across all staff who engage with clients, and to target full MI training (i.e., including the relational and technical aspects) to staff whose role is to work with work-focused clients to increase their engagement in training and/or employment.

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